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No. II.

BENGAL SILK.

Report on Prize Silk from Bengal.

ON the 13th April, 1839, a Committee met for the purpose of investigating the quality of two samples of Bengal raw silk, sent by the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India to the Society of Arts, and which are thus noticed in a letter from J. Bell, Esq. Secretary, dated 25th July, 1838, addressed to the Secretary of the Society of Arts.

“ I have the pleasure to send two skeins of each kind of Bengal raw silk, which bore off the Society’s medals this year. I have ticketed them with the names of the manufacturers, Messrs. Rose and Larruletta. The former gentleman won the gold medal; the latter, the silver medal; and it would be interesting and highly satisfactory to have the opinion of good silk-brokers in England on these prize skeins, and how the quality stands in contrast with the best Italian silks.”

From an article in the sixth volume of the *Transactions of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India*, it appears that the cocoons from which Mr. W. G. Rose’s silk was wound were reared in a village quite close to the factory of Ramnaghur, near Coolbariah. Mr. Larruletta’s silk was produced from cocoons raised at Jungypore, and wound off under the care of Mr. Geo. Lay, manager of Mr. Larruletta’s (late the Com-

pany's) silk filature at the same place. Respecting these latter cocoons, Mr. Lay writes, "The drought destroyed four-fifths of the worms, from bad and scanty food; and even those that lived to spin, have done it so poorly, that I may assert, without fear of contradiction from my neighbours, that we have not had one single good full cocoon, white or yellow."

The samples consisted of one skein of white and one of yellow silk from each candidate.

Mr. Witts considers Mr. Rose's white skein to be equal in quality to the very finest Italian silks, but probably of too fine a staple to be wound in England. It would have been more valuable if two more cocoons had been added in the reeling. Mr. Lay's yellow skein is very clean, and free from nibs.

Mr. Winkworth, one of the chairmen of the committee, having shewn the samples to Messrs. Durant and Co., silk-brokers, received from them the following note:—

Copthall Court, 25th April, 1839.

DEAR SIR,

It is evident that the reelers of the samples of silk you have shewn to us are perfect masters of their business, and that extreme care has been exercised in every department: it is nearly as perfect as could be calculated upon, but the thread, we expect, is too fine for any useful purpose of manufacture, particularly No. 5 (Mr. Rose's), and consequently difficult to value. We think silk less fine, with equal perfections, would be worth twenty-two shillings per lb. and prove a good substitute for some of the better classes of Italian silks. The best silk of Italy would command at least twenty per cent more.

DURANT AND CO.

Mr. Winkworth also sent a skein from each sample to his brother's house, Messrs. Winkworth and Procter, of Manchester, to have it thrown. This was done; and the following letter shews the opinion of the above-named manufacturers respecting them:—

DEAR SIR,

Manchester, 11th May, 1839.

THE general appearance of the samples of silk you have sent us is superior to any Bengal silk we have been accustomed to see. The fine sample, No. 5 (Mr. Rose's), we think too fine to be used for any purpose we are acquainted with. It does not appear to have been carefully reeled; and the loss of time and waste it would occasion in being worked into tram or organzine would be very great. This may be partly judged of by the quantity of waste made in endeavouring to wind off a small part of the sample, which we return herewith. The coarser sample, No. 6 (Mr. Lay's), is in every respect good. It is fine enough for nearly all purposes, and would work well. We suppose its value in the present state of the market would be twenty-two to twenty-three shillings per lb.

WINKWORTH AND PROCTER.

The chairman himself (Mr. T. Winkworth), also an extensive dealer in manufactured silks, stated that he entirely concurs in the opinions expressed in the above letter.

Mr. Brocklehurst stated that there are several circumstances to which the general inferiority of Bengal silk, compared with Italian silk, is to be attributed. One is, that the Bengal silk is commonly grown in low dis-

tracts, whereas that grown in hilly situations is always, *cæteris paribus*, of superior quality.

There are two, and in some places in India three, crops of silk in the year; and, to supply the food for the later crops, the mulberries are cultivated as bushes, and are encouraged to throw up strong suckers, the leaves of which are too succulent for the worm, and injure the quality of its silk. The Indian cocoons, especially those of the second and third crops, are smaller than the Italian ones, and the filament is comparatively finer; a larger number of cocoons therefore is required to be reeled at once, and, from the frequent breaking of the filaments, the thread is knotty and imperfect. These two defects can be avoided only by selecting the largest cocoons to breed from, and by feeding the worms with leaves from grown trees instead of from bushes.

In Italy and France, great attention is paid to securing an uniform degree of fineness in the thread; and this is estimated from the weight of 400 yards, taken from time to time during the reeling. In India, they judge merely by the eye. Another defect in the Indian skeins is, that they are usually fine on the outside, while the principal part is coarse; whence accrues a great loss, the outer part being often mere refuse.

RESOLVED,

That a copy of the above Report be sent to the Chairman of the Court of Directors, and to the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India.